

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Asisclo B. Sevilla, 70, former peddler, Puunene,
and current store and travel agency owner, Wailuku

A. B. Sevilla, Ilocano, was born November 8, 1909, in Currimao, Ilocos Norte, Philippines.

Sevilla's life history, including his many business and community achievements, has been published elsewhere*. The following pages summarize his less documented experiences as a plantation camp peddler.

*See, for example, Cummins E. Speakman, Jr., Mowee: An Informal History of the Hawaiian Island, and Mayor Elmer F. Cravalho's Maui County Bicentennial Report.

NOTES FROM UNRECORDED INTERVIEW

with

Asisclo B. Sevilla

October 9, 1979

Wailuku, Maui

BY: Warren Nishimoto

A.B. Sevilla decided that Hawaii was a natural place to make money. His family gave him about \$100, enabling him to come to Hawaii and work for the sugar plantation under a three-year contract. He left his farming village on October 28, 1928 for Manila, and on November 22, he arrived in Honolulu aboard the President Taft. After a short stay in Honolulu, Sevilla boarded an inter-island steamer for Puunene, Maui to join his uncle.

Although desiring to work in the cane fields, Sevilla, then 19, was sent to Puunene Mill's engine room, where he worked for three years at one dollar a day. While working in the mill, Sevilla, in 1930, became a clothing salesman for the Great Western Tailoring Company. He and two friends heard about the opportunity to earn money selling tailored suits through a magazine advertisement. Going from house to house, camp to camp, Sevilla and his friends--the "Three Musketeers," they were called--carried briefcases containing samples of tailored suits. [See photo section.] "One suit cost \$21.50. Three of us were needed to sell these suits because one guy would measure the customers, one would write down the measurements on a pad, and one would show the samples to the customers." Travelling in an open-air "touring car" with a canvas top, the three together would receive a total of five dollars commission for each suit sold. Their clientele was all Filipino--plantation workers. "The busiest time of the year was during the Maui County Fair. The men would really like to get dressed up in their new suits."

After his three-year contract working at Puunene Mill was completed in 1931, Sevilla continued to peddle suits. But he soon discovered another way to make money--as a bagoong salesman. He was contacted by a Manila distributor, Solomon Laurenzana, to peddle bagoong to plantation residents. He was able to buy a 1930 Ford and convert it into a truck by removing the back seat. Once a month, Sevilla would go down to Kahului wharf and pick up the shipment of bagoong. "I would order twenty-five gallon cans of bagoong a month and pick them up from the wharf. The next morning, I would put them in gallon and quart bottles and start peddling by that afternoon." Sevilla peddled to "all the Puunene camps" and earned between twenty-five and thirty dollars per month.

From 1931 to 1938, Sevilla worked in the Kahului Store in the wholesale

department. Because of the money and experience gained from these various business endeavors, he was able to open his own general merchandise store in 1938, selling groceries and furniture. Beginning in 1946, Sevilla delivered kerosene to plantation homes from his store.

**STORES and
STOREKEEPERS of
Paia & Puunene, Maui**

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